



Hopkinsville Police Officer
Patricia Alexander

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This Fall when students in Christian County start to settle into their school desks with their freshly-sharpened pencils and anxious smiles, Hopkinsville Police Officer Patricia Alexander will be getting comfortable in her new role, too.

Taking on the role of school resource officer for the county’s elementary schools isn’t much of a stretch for this mother of seven. For Alexander, exposing the young students to law enforcement in a positive way is a fulfilling part of her job.

Most of my time here with Hopkinsville I have been on patrol. When I was in COPS (community oriented policing) division, we did a lot of community work. We would go out to some of the less-fortunate neighborhoods and try cleaning up a little bit. We had days we would go and pick up garbage, paint over graffiti, things like that.

In Hopkinsville, we’re very busy. We have a lot of calls for service. Sometimes it is back-to-back-to-back-to-back. Sometimes you can go an hour without anything. For a rookie, that can be a little overwhelming. But I can say being a rookie and being a female here at the police department, everywhere I go there is somebody there with me. Even now. These guys are not going to let anything happen to me. They’re really good about that. Everywhere I go, nobody is too far away.

I was hired here in February 1998. Before I came here I worked at the Christian County Jail for a couple years. Prior to that I was a corrections officer at the Federal Medical Center in Lexington, a state corrections officer and I was in the Navy for four years.

Working on patrol is quite different from corrections. Because when you’re a corrections officer, most of the time everybody is in their cell. So you don’t really have a lot of contact with them. Unlike here, you’re in contact with different people every day. So I really can’t compare being a corrections officer to a police officer.

My last year in the Navy I was what was referred to back then as a Master at Arms. That was basically the Navy’s version of military police. But we called it shore patrol. That’s what really got me into wanting to be a police officer. When I worked at the jail here, I kept seeing the officers come in and I asked them about being an officer. I wanted to try it, so I did and so far it has been really good.

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My husband, Jefferson Alexander, is a lieutenant here. Because he is a lieutenant over the detective division, when we’re at work we hardly ever see each other. We’re like the Brady Bunch. Between us we have seven. We have four children who live at home right now. It’s something different every day — kids keep you running. With sports and everything else it’s constant.

Next school year I am going to be a school resource officer working in the elementary schools. My family has definitely prepared me more for working in the schools. I’ve had a son to go all the way through school now. Just having a kid going through what other kids are going through gives you an advantage of what to expect and what not to expect. We also have some really good principals at the elementary schools. You can tell they love these kids, and they try to do everything they can for them.

I am looking forward to being an SRO. I did it for not quite a month before school was out. It was interesting. We had one kid who was suspended because he brought an Airsoft pistol to school, so we had to go through the expulsion hearing. There are some problem kids, but there are some really good ones, too. It’s something different every day with kids. You never know what they’re going to say or what they’re going to do.

I am responsible for 10 elementary schools. I try to visit at least five a day, but it’s really hard. I get to one then another will call because they have a problem with a child, so I try to do five a day, but it usually doesn’t work. I’m spread pretty thin.

I think with elementary kids, of course they are younger, so they’re not really as knowledgeable in certain areas as middle school or older kids. You have middle-school kids who pretty much know how to try to get by with stuff. Elementary school kids — they’re just learning. They are easier to talk to and have more respect for law enforcement officers. Not all middle-school kids are disrespectful. Not all kids are disrespectful. But the ones we encounter, sometimes we encounter over and over again.

I’m trying to do preventative work. I like to get in the schools, go in the classroom, sit

down and talk to the kids. I want to let them know police officers aren’t bad and not to be afraid. That whenever they see one of us, they can come talk to us.

I would like for the kids to think school is a place they want to be, enjoy being and are not afraid to go to. To let them know police officers are not all bad. No matter what kind of family issues they have had with police, it is not that we’re bad people, we’re just trying to correct some problems.

I guess you could say the best thing about being an officer to me is that sense that you are out there doing good in something that is going terribly wrong. There is a lot of crime happening — it’s ridiculous. I just like the sense that I’m one of the good guys, trying to help this community be a better place.

Every call is so different, but one of the most dangerous situations is a domestic call. You never know how they’re going to go. One minute the victim is willing to cooperate. The next minute they say, ‘No, you’re not taking my husband.’ Those are challenging situations. Any time you’re dealing with anybody’s family, it’s challenging.

I don’t think people respond to me differently because I’m female. It is just all in the way you talk to people. If you go out here with a nasty attitude, you’re going to get treated with a nasty attitude. I like to go out here and talk to people, be nice to them and not be rude. If you do that, most people are going to respect you. Some situations a female will want to talk to a female officer, but overall, people respond to you based on how you treat them.

It’s a great profession to get into. But, if you get into law enforcement as a police officer, it is going to have to be something you love to do and not just something you want to do. There are a lot of ups and a lot of downs. There is a lot of stress in this job; you have to be able to deal with. You have to be a pretty strong person emotionally as well as being in good physical health. But it has been a great profession for me so far.

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